



Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

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AGENDA DATE: March 3, 2010

TO: Front Country Trails Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force

FROM: Front Country Trails Task Force Staff

Subject: Front Country Trails Coordinator Update

RECOMMENDATION: That the Front Country Trails (FCT) Multi-Jurisdictional Task Force receives a status report on the FCT Coordinator Activities and concur with staff on key 2010 FCT Work plan priorities.

DISCUSSION: The purpose of this staff report is to provide the FCT Task Force with a progress report on work by the FCT Coordinator and discuss the work plan for key priorities for 2010. The discussion below is organized by the task Force-approved management recommendations.

Administration/Organization

Develop a multi-agency FCT Strategy.

To become familiar with FCT issues and objectives, the FCT Coordinator held a series of meetings with City, County and Forest Service staff, stakeholders from Santa Barbara County Trails Council (SBTC), Santa Barbara Mountain Mike Trail Volunteers (SBMTV), Multiuse Group, Los Padres Forest Association, State Parks, and several unaffiliated trail users. The Coordinator also attended meetings of Santa Barbara County Riding and Hiking Trails Committee (CRAHTAC), SBTC and Sierra Club. The Coordinator also reviewed prior Task Force agendas, presentation materials, and video from past public meetings. This combination of research and community outreach has helped to clarify community priorities as related to Task Force recommendations, and to identify policy and historical barriers to moving forward with identified goals. This research lays the groundwork for the FCT Strategy.

Develop a funding plan to address trails planning and maintenance, capital projects, enforcement, and education and outreach.

Initial work to develop a funding plan, included research into state grant funding for trails work, as well as funding opportunities from other sources. The standard funding cycle for the state grant funds begins with training and workshops for interested parties in the fall, with grant deadlines in early spring. Research into partnerships for this grant cycle will begin in early summer.

Smaller grants are available at other times during the year. As an example, the National Environmental Education Fund announced the award of ten capacity building grants for trails in the amount of \$1000 each.

In addition, the PG&E Stewardship Council has three funding streams with the following objective:

Our core goal is to improve the lives of underserved youth by providing greater access to outdoor experiences from urban parks in the city to watersheds in the wilderness.

FCT Coordinator could be instrumental in working with a partnership of interested groups to create a program that falls into these guidelines.

Discussions have also begun with MTF to understand their fundraising strategy and investigate whether similar efforts would be appropriate in the larger community (for the front country trails).

Foster development of an umbrella non-profit community organization to assist with trail maintenance, education, fundraising, and community support. Confirm/Maintain multi-agency/non-profit partner agreements.

Although the development of an umbrella organization may be the long-term solution to management of the front country trail system, none of the existing trail groups are in an ideal position to serve as the umbrella group. Further work in the implementation of the management recommendations is also needed.

Community Outreach and Education

Re-implement education efforts, including trail signage, trail hosts, and other sources of information

The challenge with community outreach is to coordinate the public outreach activities of existing groups and to create a centralized portal for information about trail conditions and activities. This portal can also serve to increase community education on etiquette and conflict issues.

Investigation has begun on creating a webpage for the front country trails. Discussions about hosting through the Forest Service or hosting an independent page take into account the ability to update the webpage easily, and the ability to sustain the webpage regardless of changes in staff or funding options. Further discussion with the Forest Service Public Relations Officer is required.

The Forest Service has begun to use Twitter for trails updates, and outreach will include FCT information. Discussions about other social marketing techniques have begun.

A Community Outreach Workgroup was proposed at the February Stakeholders meeting. This group will reach out into the larger community and work with college communications groups, community television, newspapers, online news media, and other appropriate outreach venues.

Build broader community support for the FCT by working with trail user groups to sponsor quarterly events/work days and an annual event to recognize volunteers and collaborative partnerships, among others.

The Front Country trails were not engineered to be sustainable trails, but rather grew from Forest Service standards for equestrian use. In addition to regular annual maintenance, such as brushing and slough removal, due the topography, the trails require sustainable water control features. Community volunteers are critical for majority of maintenance work. A key objective will be to further develop and nurture agency partnerships with the trail user groups that participate in trail maintenance and the community at large.

Extensive research into the trail maintenance program helped to identify goals, barriers and solutions designed to increase community participation in trail projects. The trail maintenance sponsorship agreement established last year with SBTC has been renewed and SBMTV recently entered into a similar agreement. These agreements are held with the Forest Service. In addition, Trail Crew Leader positions will be available directly through the Forest Service.

These agreements as well as individual trail leader positions, will help to ensure that there is adequate trained leadership for the three Trail Days traditionally sponsored by the agencies, and will lead to more trail work done by community groups and sponsored individuals. This program, combined with greater community outreach, should also help to mitigate unauthorized trail work.

Trail Management and Maintenance

Conduct an assessment of existing trail conditions and use to evaluate the application and scope of a trail classification system.

The trail survey project is underway. A status report is provided in a separate report to the task Force.

Explore developing consistent standards for trails planning, policy, permits, and regulations

The FCT Coordinator reviewed trail planning and maintenance standards provided by IMBA, CA State Trails toolkit, USDA Guidelines and shorter articles provided by hiking and equestrian groups. These guidelines are fairly consistent on key trail maintenance points, such as the use of rolling dips for erosion control. Until the task Force and three agencies develop different standards, all 2010 trail maintenance projects will be based on standards in the USDA guide.

SUBMITTED BY: Rebecca Mordini, Front Country Trails Coordinator



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2010 Front Country Trails Key Priorities and Goals

I. Community Outreach

Goal 1: Create and implement comprehensive community outreach plan

Date: April 1

Steps:

Recruit community volunteers for community outreach
Identify needs and resources
Create on-line outreach that best utilizes websites, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, online news, and coordinates with stakeholder groups

Goal 2: Double the number of organizations involved with FCT work and planning

Date: May 1

Steps:

Establish group/organization for participation
Invite community leaders involved in trails to participate
Hold organizational meeting
Establish internet-based portal for interested parties to find us
Follow consistent community outreach plan to highlight work of the FCT and inspire people to get involved

Goal 3: Level one maintenance on each FCT trail this year

Date: October 1

Steps:

Expand trail volunteer program
Calendar at least one workday per season for each trail
Find community groups to do own workday through outreach and invitations

Goal 4: Create rolling dips on select trails

Date: June 1

Steps:

Expand training for advanced trail work
Review trails to identify specific locations and engineering for dips
Determine manpower requirements based on trail plan
Accomplish trail work based on trail plan

2010 Front Country Trails Key Priorities and Goals

Goal 5: Increase the number and broaden the scope of community events

Date: Ongoing

Steps:

- Organize and support three community trail days
- Complete related trail projects (such as signs)
- Participate in existing community events
- Establish educational and social events in addition to workdays

II. Fundraising

Goal 1: Raise funds necessary for trail projects

Date: December

Steps:

- Identify funding needs with staff and partners
- Identify funding sources
- Create fundable programs if necessary
- Apply for grants

III. Trail Standards

Goal 1: Create a proposal for trail standards

Date: December

Steps:

- Research and analysis on options for trail design and standards including change management used by other trail systems
- Create community process for identifying community vision, use and needs for FCT
- Draft proposed recommendations